

PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TOWARD AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The societal change caused by modern development according to our historical experience can be expressed by urban expansion indicated by the increasing rate of urban population in a society. The final result of such transformation from a rural to urban industrial society is a big decline in the agricultural sector. Japan is a case in point. The country's agriculture is already a small industry with a small number of labor force engaged in it.

As regards 'participation' in Development Studies, it became popular since the 1970s mainly due to the failures of previous rural development projects. Earlier years mainly saw the discussion centering on the definitional notion of participation. It was often pointed out that participation stands for both ends and means of development, and that participation itself does not necessarily show effective measures to its implementation. In more recent years efforts have been made to invent various measures to promote popular participation in project implementation in the rural areas of the developing countries. Though the importance of participation in development projects is widely acknowledged, there still exist many cases of donor-driven project implementation. Thus measures for real grassroots participation instrumental in poverty alleviation in the Third World countryside are yet to be invented and applied.

When we carefully look at the experience of agricultural and rural development in the postwar Japan, it can be mentioned that there are important lessons to be learned for participatory agricultural and rural development in today's developing countries. The example of these can be found in the Rural Livelihood Improvement Programs (R-LIP). They started in the late 1940s as an integral part of the agrarian reform policy. Later the R-LIP itself has become mature in terms of the idea and measure to put into practice.

In the R-LIP activities rural women were identified as their main target population. They tried to help rural women help themselves with (1) problem identification through scientific analysis of the real causes of the problems facing them, (2) thinking of possible ways to solve them, (3) practical solution by using simple technology, and (4) executing evaluation and reflection. Such problem-solving processes were cyclically practiced and the practical problem-solving experiences were accumulated over a long period of time. The ideas and methods of this R-LIP approach were not available at the very beginning of the R-LIP. They were invented and formulated through practices of R-LIP activities by participant rural women and female Livelihood Improvement Extension Workers involved in helping them.

The agricultural sector has dramatically changed in the course of economic transformation due to prevalent part-time farming and a general decline of agricultural popularity as occupation. However, as far as the R-LIP is concerned, it has contributed both to productivity enhancement in agriculture and uplift of rural livelihood because these two aspects of farm households are the two wheels of a car. The more important is that practical problem-solving experiences have resulted in women participants having become the active agents of rural life. This corresponds to the emerging values in development, such as Gender and Development (GAD), the empowerment of locals, particularly women, and human development. Therefore we can say that the R-LIP experience in Japan is a typical example of participatory agricultural and rural development.

As long as people are alive, the needs of Livelihood Improvement exist regardless of time and place. This is because the menu of Livelihood Improvement always differs according to the levels of socio-economic conditions. The range of R-LIP activities has been changing from the inception through the present LIP, including improved farming practices, rational farm household lifestyles, family member health checks, keeping clean rural environments, farm management skills, group farming for rice cultivation, business enterprising, and local economic promotion. More recently, income generation and self-employment creation by farmwomen have become common, with a result that there already exist many rural communities where female participants play important roles in local food production and food processing either individually or in groups.

Attention should be given to the fact that these achievements in R-LIP have not been realized within a short period of time. Among the essential factors for successful R-LIP are long-term commitments of women's small group activities for Livelihood Improvement, the accumulation of problem-solving experience, and social capital formation between female participants and Livelihood Improvement Extension Workers. These factors have been instrumental also in the promotion of income generating activities (IGA) by rural women with the use of local technology and local resources.

R-LIP puts rural people at the center of development activities. The importance therefore lies in its participatory ideas and approaches created through practical problem-solving experiences of R-LIP rather than in the actual project activities. Thus, it can be said that the Livelihood Improvement approach offers significant and universal applicability to agricultural and rural development elsewhere. There is already an increasing number of developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, in which the idea and method of R-LIP are already introduced with the help of the training programs of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). What is interesting and important in these cases is the fact that the introduced participatory approach toward agricultural and rural development is modified and/or internalized so as to adapt to the local conditions in which development activities are in practice.

KEYWORDS

rural development, participatory approach, R-LIP, two wheels of production and life, Japan's experience

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Participatory Approach towards Agricultural and Rural Development



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PART ONE

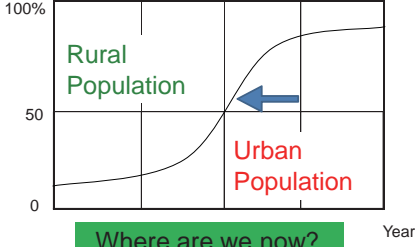
THE ISSUES AND NEW CHALLENGES

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Agricultural and Rural Development in the Context

Rate of Urban Population **Long-term Social Transformation**



100%
50%
0

Rural Population
Urban Population

Where are we now?

Years

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New Challenges

In addition to the conventional problems, such as Poverty Reduction, we are facing with;

- (1) Deagriculturization
 - Rural youth exodus and rural non-agricultural jobs
 - Shift from food/agriculture to income/rural
- (2) Agriculture will have to cope with **increasing dependency on female farmers, rural depopulation and aging of farming population.**

→ Japan is a case in point!

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IGA by Malay Farmwomen



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Common Food Processing in Palestine (Photos taken by Shams Nablus)

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Garment Training for Farmwomen in a Himalayan Village



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PART TWO

PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

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Evolutionary Change of Development Strategies

	Major strategies of Agricultural and rural development
1950s~	Agrarian reform Community Development
1960s~	Green revolution: dissemination of new farm technology to produce more foods
1970s~	Rural development (RD) and/or Integrated Rural Development (IRD): agricultural development in poor regions
1980s~	Structural Adjustment Policy and decline in RD/IRD subsidies
1990s~	Poverty reduction strategies
2000s~	MDGs and World Food Summit to satisfy human security

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Participation in Development

- (1) The idea of Participation in development came into the scene in the **1970s**, mainly due to previous development project failures.
- (2) Initial years saw its conceptual clarification as **means and/or goal of development**.
- (3) Methodological innovations for grassroots participation, such as **RRA, PRA, PLA**, were introduced, then its wider application followed since the 1980s, but . . .

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Participation is Panacea?

Though one cannot deny the importance of participation in development, "Has it made any big difference in implementing development projects?"

- (1) Is participation always a good thing?
- (2) Should every development project be participatory?
- (3) Is participation sometimes not appropriate?
- (4) Is a more critical approach needed?
- (5) Is participation always beneficial?

(Source) "Tyranny or democracy? Pros and cons of participation" in id21 Society & economy, Nov.,2003.

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PART THREE

JAPAN'S EXPERIENCE

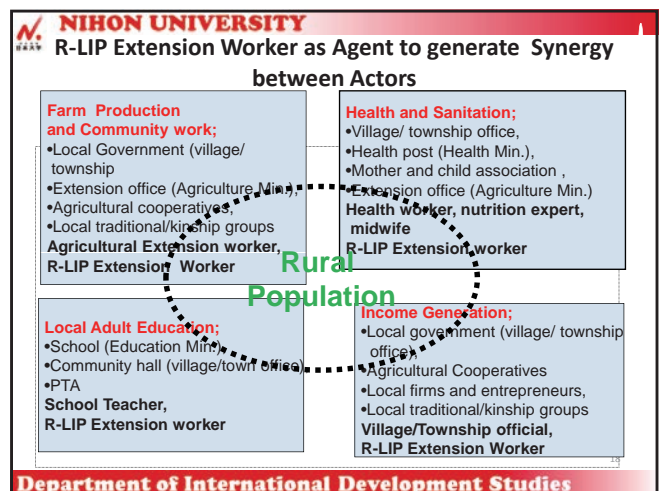
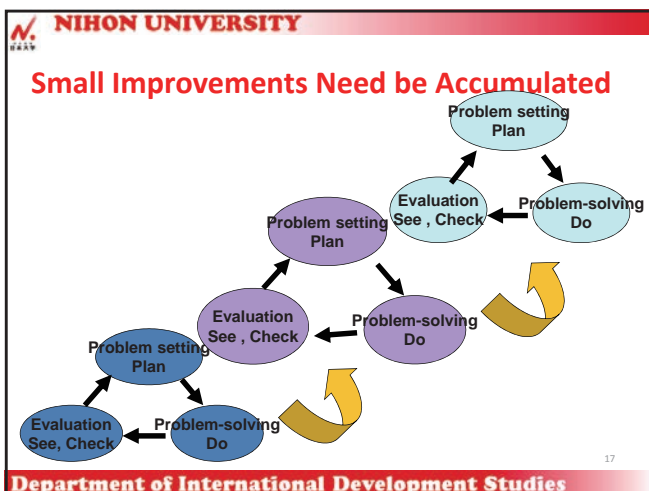
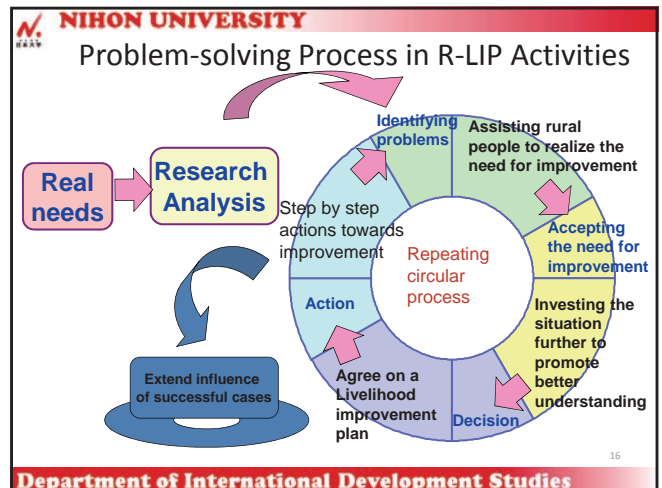
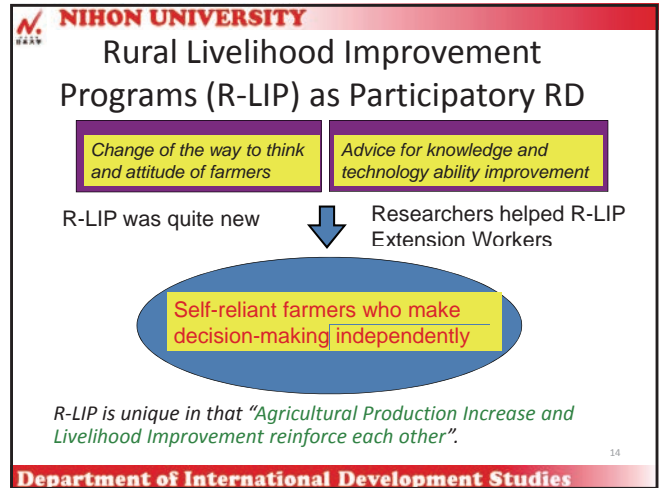
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Japan's Policy Experience

	Agricultural Policy	Rural Development
1945~ Democratization	Agrarian Reform ○ Food production Increase by supply of subsidized Inputs	○ Rural Livelihood Improvement programs (R-LIP)
1960s~ Modernization	○ Comparable farmer's income to urban households through new crops and enlargement	○ Rural life modernization and measures against rural depopulation through Infrastructure investment
1990s~ Economic Revitalization of Rural Areas	○ Agricultural sustainability and multi-functionality ○ Food Quality & Safety ○ Rate of national food self-sufficiency	○ Rural economy promotion, New urban needs for Rural Value, and Urban-rural Interactions, ○ Income generating activities (IGAs) and Women's business enterprises

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Characteristics of R-LIP Approach

- (1) **Integrative and Holistic** (Local, Regional through National)
- (2) **Location-specific and Practical** (Drawing on existing local resources, knowledge, network)
- (3) **Multi-sector** (Synergy between actors concerned to service delivery)
- (4) **Participatory and Human-centered** (Fostering people's autonomy: "Self-decision making Farmer and Farmwomen")

→ **R-LIP lesson: participation is an integral part of human-centered development.**

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PART FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

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How to Start R-LIP Approach

	Conventional Approach	R-LIP type Participatory Approach (Kaizen type Approach)
Starting from	What they do not have, lacking	What we have, what we can do, Anyone in anywhere can start
Inputs	Technology, capital, credit, markets, information	Problem-solving through needs satisfaction in everyday life requires nothing special.
Main target of development	Material output, income and growth	Life in the locality Human development
Sustainability	single project base	Ever lasting
Ownership Responsibility	Their project, their responsibility	Our project, our responsibility

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Contribution by Researchers

Economics
Sociology
Anthropology
etc

Japan's Experience Studies
Promoting JICA Training for R-LIP

Researchers

Scientific Advice for Field Work Methods

Research Activities

Synergy

R-LIP Extension Workers

Farmers Farmwomen

Local Voice

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Summary

- **Agricultural and Rural Development in the 21st Century needs to take into account:**
 - (1) Rapidly changing the rural world
 - (2) Participation be combined with other related human-centered approaches and methods
 - (3) Involving researchers involved in Rural Studies and Affairs with various disciplinary tools and methodologies

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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